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Chairman Pavlov, members of the committee, distinguished visitors and guests. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak before this committee.

Just outside Ann Arbor, there's a charter school called the South Arbor Preparatory Academy. It's an incredible place – a school where innovation and creativity have allowed them to achieve at the highest levels. It isn't just one of the best charter schools in the state – it's one of the best schools in the state, period, and they have the test scores and results to prove it. Well, like every charter school in Michigan, South Arbor is open to anyone in the state and they're only allowed to take a limited number of students, so every year, they have to hold a lottery to decide who gets in and who doesn't. Despite what you might have heard, charter schools are not allowed to cherry-pick their students. They have to hold a lottery.

Last year, there were 556 students who wanted to get in to that school. There were only 26 openings. Twenty-six people for 556 spots. If you were trying to get your child into South Arbor, you had less than a 5 percent chance of winning the lottery to get your child in. Less than 5 percent.

On my way over here today, I bought an instant lottery ticket. I figured I'd add another dollar to the school aid fund. Anyway, I have a better chance of winning THIS lottery than I do of winning THAT lottery at South Arbor.

We see this same scenario played out every single year at charter schools all over Michigan. More than 70 percent of the charter schools in this state have a waiting list, and some of them are more than double the school's enrollment. The waiting list for the Michigan Virtual Charter Academy has more than a thousand students on it. The Jalen Rose Leadership Academy opened up in Detroit earlier this month, and it filled up right away. They already have a waiting list of about 40 kids, and they're a brand-new school.

Is this any way to run an educational system? We have such limited choice in this state that we have to hold a *lottery* to decide our children's future? We are gambling with the future of our students. We are leaving their education to chance.

You've been hearing a lot about charter schools over the past few weeks. You've heard from experts who have told you that charter schools are successful and accountable and they're quoted plenty of data and statistics to back that up. You've heard from educators who have told you that being in a charter school has allowed them to innovate in ways that just aren't possible in traditional public schools. You've heard from students who have told you that attending a charter school has challenged them and prepared them for their future in ways that a traditional school wasn't able to.

Unfortunately, you've also heard a lot of misinformation from some of the same people who have been trotting out the same inaccurate distraction for years. So I did want to spend a little time setting the record straight – and if you don't believe any of what I'm about to tell you, please feel free to check it out yourself.

Michigan's Charter Schools
Achievement • Choice • Accountability

A week or so ago, a group distributed a white paper that supposedly laid out some of the arguments against charter schools. The whole theme of this document was that parents don't need, don't want and don't deserve educational choice. Well, I disagree. And it would appear that the vast majority of people in this state agree with me.

Before I get into some of the flawed arguments laid out in this white paper, I wanted to share this number with you: 77. According to a poll taken earlier this year, that's the percentage of people in Michigan who favor charter schools – 77 percent. And that number is rising each year, which shows you that the more people learn about charter schools, the more they like them. When this same poll was taken in 2002, only 52 percent of Michigan residents said they favor charter schools. Now that number is up to 77 percent. So when the other side tries to tell you that parents don't want choice, that they don't want charter schools, don't believe them. By an overwhelming majority, Michigan residents favor charter schools.

Now let's look at some of the arguments that people have been trying to make against charter schools. They say that charter schools don't achieve – that their performance is no better or even worse than traditional public schools. By any measure, that's not true. In areas like Detroit, Grand Rapids, Lansing and Flint, charter schools outperformed traditional public schools on the MEAP by 10 to 15 percent. We saw the same thing when AYP results were released last month. In the Detroit Public Schools, only 33 percent of schools made AYP. Among charter schools in Detroit, 70 percent made AYP. Here in Lansing, every single charter school made AYP. Every single traditional high school in Lansing failed AYP, along with quite a few elementary and middle schools.

They say charter schools don't achieve? Tell that to the Black River Public School Academy in Holland, which was named the best high school in the state by the Washington Post. That's right – the best high school in the state is a charter school.

They say charter schools don't innovate. The truth is that charter schools innovate at a level that isn't possible in traditional public schools. Here are a few examples. At the Jalen Rose Leadership Academy in Detroit, as Jalen himself told you a couple weeks ago, they're desperately trying to lift the students up as quickly as possible. Most students in Detroit are so far behind by the time they enter high school, so as Jalen says, they have a lot of catching up to do. At his school, the students go to class from 8 in the morning until 4:30 in the afternoon. They'll be attending class 211 days this year. They'll be going to school on Saturdays. Would that type of innovation be possible in a traditional public school?

At FlexTech High School in Brighton, students are able to combine online learning with classroom education as they set their own individual schedules. It's the perfect situation for students who have to work during the day, for elite athletes who aren't able to attend regular classes, or for students who simply learn better when they're able to go at their own pace. FlexTech is the perfect embodiment of Governor Snyder's charge when it comes to reforming education in the state: "Any Time, Any Place, Any Way, Any Pace." And again, would this type of innovation be possible in a traditional public school?

You want more innovation? How about the West Michigan Aviation Academy in Grand Rapids – an entire school dedicated to preparing its students for a career in aviation. General Colin Powell was so impressed when he heard about that school that he visited it himself in April. Or how about the Countryside Academy in Southwest Michigan, which specializes in agricultural education. Or the Marvin L. Winans Academy of Performing Arts in Detroit, which provides an education in the arts that's second to none. Do charter schools innovate? Absolutely.

They say there are few if any charter high schools in the state. Well, it might surprise them to learn that in reality, nearly half the charter schools in the state are high schools. Out of Michigan's 255 charter schools, 107 of them are high schools – about 42 percent.

They say charter schools don't provide special education services. Of course they do. In fact, the percentage of special education students in charter schools is almost exactly the same as it is in traditional public schools – 10 percent in charter schools compared to 13 percent in traditional schools. And charter schools educate students with all types of disabilities – from mild to moderate to severe.

They say charter schools are racially segregated. That's flat-out ludicrous. Charter schools – just like traditional public schools – reflect the make-up of their communities. If the community is racially homogenous, most of the schools in that community will be racially homogenous – charter or traditional. If the community is diverse, the charter school will be diverse.

They say charter schools spend proportionately more on administration. The reason it appears that way is because charter schools, unlike traditional schools, can't get millage money to pay for facilities, so their facility costs show up in the budget as administrative costs. The fact is that charter schools receive far less in state aid than traditional public schools, and in most cases, they do more with it.

And on and on. We can't keep doing the same thing in all our public schools and expect different results. If not in charter public schools where else can educators be empowered and held accountable for driving innovative change in our schools? How do we improve a broken system? How do we create an educational system in Michigan that prepares ALL kids for the 21st century?

For Michigan students to succeed in the 21st century economy, innovation will drive achievement, charter schools and the ideas in these bills will help create the policy environment for real change, for improved achievement. Charter schools are improving and implementing innovative approaches that teach children, empower parents and better manage schools.

The fact is, parents want this, they want choice. All you need to do is look at the charter waiting lists around the state and you'll see that. Down at South Arbor, there are enough students on the waiting list to open a second school right now, but they're not allowed to do it.

Parents are desperately looking for another option, and the time has come for them to get it. There are high-quality charter school operators out of state who would love to replicate their success in Michigan, but because of this arbitrary cap, they haven't been able to. It's time to give them a chance. It's time to give parents a choice.



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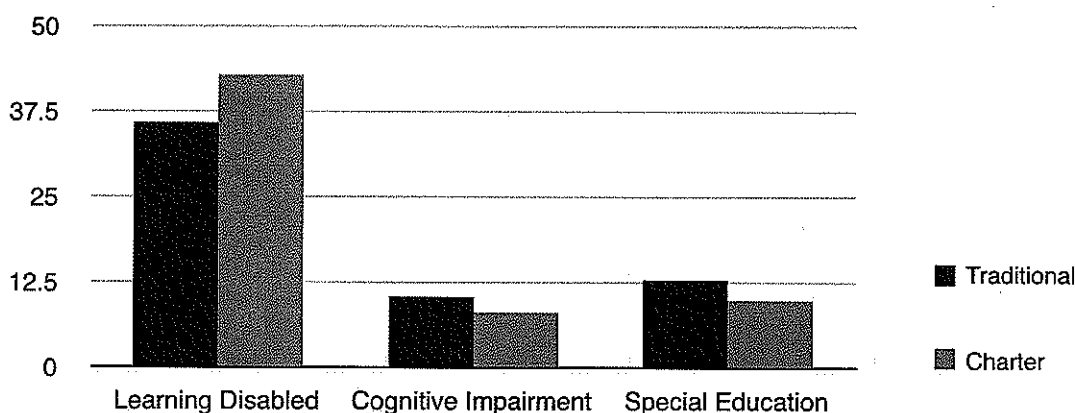
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CHARTER SCHOOLS AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

Do charter schools provide special education services? Of course. In fact, the percentage of special education students at traditional schools and charter schools is quite similar. And charter schools provide special education services across the spectrum, from mild to moderate to severe.

COMPARING CHARTER SCHOOLS AND TRADITIONAL SCHOOLS:
PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WHO ARE DISABLED



As the chart shows, **13 percent** of students at traditional public schools are in special education, compared to **10 percent** of students in charter schools – virtually no difference. The difference is even less pronounced when you consider that 5 percent of all special education students aren't even educated in mainstream public school facilities - they're in a dedicated facility that in most cases is utilized by multiple schools in the area.

ALL TYPES OF DISABILITIES: PERCENTAGE OF DISABLED
STUDENTS IN CHARTER SCHOOLS AND
TRADITIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

	CHARTER	TRADITIONAL
Learning Disabled	43%	36%
Speech/Language Impairment	30.4%	24.8%
Cognitive Impairment	8.2%	10.5%
Emotional Impairment	5.2%	7.0%
Hearing Impairment	0.7%	1.4%
Visual Impairment	0.3%	0.4%
Physical Impairment	7.5%	8.1%
Early Childhood Delay	0.7%	2.8%
Severe Multiple Impairments	0.8%	1.7%
Autism Spectrum Disorder	2.9%	5.2%
Traumatic Brain Injury	0.3%	0.3%
Deaf/Blind	0.0%	1.7%

“When you look at the proportions of students with different disability types for charter schools, cluster districts and traditional public schools, there are no striking differences between the school populations.”

— Michigan Department of
Education, 2008

All data is from the Michigan Department of Education's 2008 report - the most recent in-depth report.

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